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THE

CAT'S TAIL:

BEING THE

HISTORY OF CHILDE MERLIN.

#15338

THE

CAT'S TAIL.

"I *WILL* A TALE UNFOLD!"

J. MOYES, TOOK'S COURT, LONDON.

"you shall judge for yourselves — there's the lady & cat"

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THE

CAT'S TAIL:

BEING THE

HISTORY OF CHILDE MERLIN.

A TALE.

BY

THE BARONESS DE KATZLEBEN,

AUTHORESS OF OTHER TOUCHING TALES
AND PATHETIC PIECES.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH; AND
T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.
M.DCCC.XXXI.

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PREFACE.

Among the many anomalous characteristics of the present day, it is worthy of remark, that the two trumpet notes most loudly and incessantly sounded with innumerable variations, are those of *Liberality* and *Personality;* a general profession of the one, and as universal an outcry against the other.

The authoress of "The Cat's Tail" is sensible that she might have sent forth that feline epic unprefaced to the world, strong in its own innocence of all offensive allusion or insidious innuendo; but choosing rather to accommodate herself to the curiously anomalous state of public feeling above alluded to, she thinks fit hereby to disclaim, not only all personality, but all covert meaning, religious or political, &c. &c., which might be suspected to lie perdu in the veracious and affecting "History of the Life and Adventures of Childe Merlin."

Gen. Rev. English

DEDICATION.

TO THE INFANT PUBLIC.

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS,

Your entrance upon the grand theatre of life having, happily for you, been delayed until an era of advanced civilisation, when the march of mind is making such rapid strides towards perfectibility, that every philosopher in swaddling clothes is competent to the office, so pleasingly illustrated by our inimitable Cruikshank, of "teaching its grandmother to suck eggs;" I dedicate to you the feline epic of "The Cat's Tail," more apprehensive that its construction should fall *below* the level of your understanding, than that it should call forth any painful exertion of your comprehensive faculties; albeit the said epic is, doubt-

less, interspersed and dignified by certain passages and allusions presupposing a precociousness of intellect on your part, which it would have been absurd to build on in those dark days of our fathers and grandfathers, when "the young ideas," so far from "shooting" up to perfection, (as is the case in our glorious age), like mushrooms in a forcing bed, were condemned to struggle their painful way to maturity through hard clods and frosty mornings, without further help than rough hoeing and weeding, and now and then a little thinning and topping too, according to the barbarous fashion of those benighted times.

I congratulate you, enlightened juveniles! on your happier destinies, which fully to appreciate, however, you should frequently call to mind the sufferings and degradation to which your less-favoured progenitors and progenitrixes were ruthlessly subjected, not only in their toilsome ascent up the rugged rock of knowledge, but under all circumstances of their hapless infancy.

Figure to yourselves, my sweet Angelina Cecilia! and my lovely little Emily Anna Maria! and Augusta Matilda! the contrast of your own perfect *tout ensemble*, all laced and braced, sandalled and trinketted, curled, frizzled, and essenced, trousered, flounced, and furbelowed, like a brood of Bantam's

graces, in full preparation to cluster, with the best possible drawing-room effect, round the *chaise-longue* of the maternal Venus: figure to yourselves, I say, the contrast of your infant persons, so decorated, to those of your great aunts, Betty, Bridget, and Barbara, as you see them represented in the old family picture, which has so long served your brothers for a target, in the great lumber-room behind your nursery. There they stand, the three antique innocents! as just sent down, hand-in-hand (like the babes in the wood), to ask papa's and mamma's blessing, after a toilette, the mysteries whereof consisted of being tied up (like measures of wheat) in plain white frocks, with plenty of tucks to allow for after-growth; blue, mottled, unstockinged legs and chilblained feet, thrust and stamped down into red morocco shoes, the *ne plus ultra* of that day's infant finery; hair brushed smooth, and shining, or left to curl and wave, at Nature the old obsolete beldame's pleasure, about sun-burnt polls, or frost-bitten ears, according to the season; and, as the finishing touch, their poor dear little snub noses rubbed up all the wrong way with cold water and soap, and a towel like a currycomb, by a nursery-maid who performed the operation with no more consideration for tender flesh than if she had been dry rubbing a mahogany table. Picture to your-

selves this contrast, (no fancy piece, my young friends!), and, as you will find it written somewhere in the subjoined poem,

"Be thankful such woes are not meted to you."

THE BARONESS DE KATZLEBEN.

THE CAT'S TAIL.

My dear little friends! if you'll listen to me,
I'll tell you a story as true as can be,
Of the life and adventures, and tragical death,
Of the prettiest cat, loves! that ever drew breath.
You must know, then, this darling was given to me
Such a very small kitten, it could but just see;
But I watched it, and nursed it, and fed it, as may be
You've often seen nurse feed and fondle the baby.
Its coat was so black! and its eyes were so green!
And its tail was the longest that ever was seen,—
The longest and thickest!—and as for its feet,
Most likely, my dears! you've all happened to meet
Some lady in mourning, as black as a crow
From the crown of her head to the tip of her toe,
All but two little spots, where a pair of white gloves
Just covered her hands to the wrists up, my loves!

Well, this kitten of mine was as like as two peas
To a lady in mourning, with white muffatees;
Allowing, you know, for the tail, and all that,
You shall judge for yourselves—there's the lady and cat.

Now, I warrant, you're all of you dying to hear
The name of this kitten—'twas Merlin! "O dear,
What a comical name!" Ay, a comical codger
Was he who once bore it. "What was he—a soldier?
Or a king? or a cat? or—" Stop, stop, little dears!
Remember, we've only *one* tongue and *two* ears—
Two stories at once is one more than I reckon'd,
And I'm telling you that of Childe Merlin the Second.

You must know, then, this kitten, though brought up by me
In the carefulest manner that kitten could be,
"With the strictest attention" (as say school credentials)
"To manners and morals," and all those essentials;
And though 'twas a good little cat in its way,
Well-behaved and complying—indeed, I may say,
On the whole (though the genius of some might be brisker),
A well-meaning mouser as ever wore whisker;
Yet candour compels me, dear children, to own,
To some naughty tricks Master Merlin was prone.

'Twas one of his fancies (the queerest of all)
To roll himself up like a little round ball,
In the great kitchen coal-box. I've mentioned, you know,
That his coat was all over as black as a crow;
And when he lay cuddled up there, not a soul
Would have known him, I'm sure, from a Newcastle coal.

Well, it happened one day, that the cook (Betty Skinner)
Got all in a flurry, while dressing her dinner;
For the jack wouldn't turn, and the mutton stood still,
And the soot tumbled down, and the fire burnt ill.
"No wonder!" quoth Betty, in wrath; "look ye there—
If the coals ar'n't all dirt!" And to prove that they were,
And to make the dull fire burn bright, at one throw
She flings on the contents of the coal-box—when, lo!
From the midst of the pile, with a terrible sound,
Out bounces a great shining coal! All astound
To see such a lump like a cinder pop out,
Back starts Mistress Betty, in horror and doubt;
And her teeth they did chatter, her eyes they did glare,
And her cap bristled up on the ends of her hair—
For she never in all her born days, Betty swore,
Had beheld such a *purse* or a *coffin* before!
"But there, in a minute," says Betty, "I *sees*"—
(You'll excuse Betty's grammar, my dears, if you please)—

"As the thing roll'd along there, I sees a tail twirling,
And what should it be, after all, but our Merlin!"

To conclude *that* adventure, I've only to tell,
That, for once, Master Merlin got off pretty well—
The tip of his tail was just frizzled or so,
(A cat's tail is soon whisked on fire, you know),
And the rim of one ear, just enough to smell musty,
And the moustache on one cheek (the right) was singed rusty:
That, indeed, was unlucky; for by the great care
Most gentlemen take of those two tufts of hair,
I suppose (though the thing I can't quite comprehend)
Their honour and welfare must somehow depend
On the flourishing state, knowing twirl, and all that,
Of those mystical twins. Now, methinks, for a *cat*
The ornament's all very well in its way—
Appropriate, neat, and so forth. But to say,
In a gentleman's phiz, that I think it engaging,
Would be false—and no falsehood shall enter my page in.

Well, from that time, I think, to the years of discretion—
By the by, that's a vague, although common, expression—
Cats attain to the term, though, much sooner than men;
So far, one may venture to say—until then

"as the thing roll'd along there, I sees a tail twirling."

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No farther adventure of moment befell
Our four-footed youth. He was thought to excel
In all the accomplishments cats take delight in—
I should add, with the single exception of fighting.
To *that* sport, I must own, he'd a mortal aversion;
But in other gymnastics, each manly diversion—
Birding, mousing, and scrambling, no matter how high,
Not a cat of his inches with Merlin could vie.

At the period just named (a discreet time of life),
He began to look round him in search of a wife;
Many fair female mousers of figure and fashion
Were quite predisposed to encourage his passion;
Many eloquent ogles from emerald eyes
At his heart were directed; and many soft sighs,
All tremblingly breathed through a pair of white whiskers,
Were aim'd at his peace by those fair feline friskers.
But he (sober youth!), counting prudence a duty,
Chose for virtue and sense, not for fashion and beauty;
And so, for the wife of his bosom selected
A prim, serious tortoiseshell, highly respected:
Their ages, indeed, were not *very* well matched,
For the lady, before Mr. Merlin was hatched
(Being *then* a lone widow), had brought up, with credit,
Nine sweet infant families. Very rare merit

Is sure, in *mean* minds, to provoke petty spite—
And many grim tabbies took special delight
In reckoning up the bride's age to a day,
By *their own* calculations; and some, by the way,
Went so far, with a boldness no scruples could daunt,
As to whisper that Merlin had married his aunt!

Did you ever, my dears, hear such horrible slander?
But no creature believed it—not e'en our old gander;
And happier pair was ne'er tethered for life,
Than Merlin the meek and his tortoiseshell wife.

In *themselves* they were blest beyond most modern spouses;
But, alas! man that muses, and Mawkin that mouses,
Are alike all exposed to the arrows of fate,
And a few were shot down upon Merlin's black pate.
He had offspring—sweet sons and fair daughters, in plenty;
But of all those fine babes, scarcely reared one in twenty.
They came into the world healthful kittens and sound,
But before the ninth day were most commonly drown'd!—
Not from carelessness, accident, *felo de se*,
Nor by any—but hold! it becometh not me
From their fate to withdraw the dark veil that hangs o'er it—
'Tis a terrible mystery! seek not to explore it.

And now, my young friends, it behoves me to tell
How a second adventure our hero befell,
From the same scorching element — whence we may judge
That the Fire-King privately owed him a grudge.
You must know, our old serving man, Pierrot by name,
(From the banks of the Loire to fair England he came),
A long, meagre Frenchman, with lank lantern jaws,
And eyes like lead bullets or gray marble taws,
And great grizzled eyebrows, and fingers like claws,
And ears that flapp'd out (like red cabbage leaves, sure,)
From an old greasy nightcap, his morning coiffure.
This worthy (our grave Major Domo was he,
Bailiff, butler — in short, our factotum, d'ye see,)
One morning rose up with his face full of care,
For an awful event in due form to prepare;
For the butcher, the fates, and himself, had decreed,
That at six that same day a fat porker should bleed.
As if conscious of innocent blood to be shed,
Aurora seem'd loath to call Sol from his bed;
And the god when awakened, said, rubbing his eyes —
" What, so soon? are you sure it's my time, girl, to rise?"
And then squinting earthward, turn'd weeping away
From the deed to be done — 'twas a dull rainy day.

But old Pierrot's firm soul no ill omen could fright,
Though he mutter'd, " Me vonder vat's come to de light!

Me vill soon make some here." So the copper beneath
He pokes in whole cart-loads of faggot and heath,
Took the torch (that is, candle) and fired the pile,
And grinn'd, as it blazed up, a grim ghastly smile.
How the flame spits and splutters, and rumbles like thunder,
As it runs through the brushwood that dark cavern under!
" Ah! ha! here be light now, for all de sun's maggots,"
Quoth Pierrot; " Mais, morbleu! vat's dat in de faggots?—
'Tis de green wood make squeak"—so he gives it a poke
Farther in with his prong: but, not liking the joke,
The green wood squeaks louder. Quoth Pierrot, " Ma foi!
C'est le diable av got in to dem faggots, je crois—
Mais, que vois-je?—deux grands yeux!—c'est le diable
lui-même!
Juste Ciel!—Sainte Vierge!"—but before he could name
His own patron, St. Peter, forth sprung from the flame
Such a fiend—such a monster as eye never saw—
Spitting fire and smoke—armed with bristle and claw—
With eyes big as saucers, that gleamed like live coals,
And yelling such yells as the valiantest souls
Might have quaked at the sound of. No wonder poor
Pierre
Shrunk back to the wall with a horrified stare,
For door-ward the fiend had cut off his retreat;
And, lo! it comes nearer!—it crawls to his feet!—

" forth sprung from the flame
Such a fiend — such a monster as eye never saw — "

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Can it be? — sure it can't — yet that sounds like a *mew!* —
'Tis a long-bodied creature. Groaned Pierre, "Après tout,
Si c'étoit notre vieux chat — Allons, diantre! levez vous —
Me vill give im von kick — ha! you tink frighten me,
Maudite bête! — mais, ma foi! c'est notre Merlin! —
c'est lui!"

Too true 'twas that luckless Grimalkin — at least
All the flames had now left of that twice-roasted beast-
Twice roasted, alas! and at last overdone —
His mamma, had she lived, had not known her own son;
So complete, so appalling, so sudden, so strange, —
So beyond all belief, was that horrible change.

His tail, that so gracefully dangled of late,
Was burnt down to a stump; and two holes in his pate,
Two ghastly scorched holes, mark'd the places once set
With two pretty prim ears, black and shining as jet;
The fur was all over singed off from his skin,
And his flesh was dried up, and his ribs were pinched in;
And, in short, when I've said there was *life* in him still,
It makes good the old saying — "A cat's hard to kill."

But, before we go farther, just look, dears, I pray,
There's a sketch done from nature the very same day

By a faithful eye-witness. O! no matter *who*,
Nor where posted precisely while taking the view:
A book-maker can't be expected, you know,
To explain all those trifles; he tells you "*'tis* so,"
And you're bound to believe him. If folks were so prying,
Half the prettiest stories would turn out sheer lying;
Half the travels and tours, picturesque and poetical,
Interspersed with neat incidents, touches pathetical,
All with pictures illustrative, done on the spot,
Might be proved—what my story, remember, is *not*—
A mere catch-penny humbug.
"O! never mind that,
Only tell us, now do, what became of the cat."
Ah! you're right, little dears! 'tis a vile trick, I know,
To wander away from one's narrative so;
But forgive me this once,—*only* this once,—and then
You shall hear, loves, how Merlin recovered again!

Yes! at last, what with physic, and plasters, and care,
By degrees he recovered his health and his hair;
But his fine waving tail and his pretty prim ears
Never sprouted again; neither wishes nor tears,
Nor ointments nor oils, were availing, alack!
To bring those becoming excrescences back.

His friends, at one time, had it partly in view
To consult Abernethy, or Mister Carpue,
In hopes, that by dint of blue pill and starvation,
The former great man might effect re-creation;*
Or the latter (should medicine and regimen fail)
Strike out some neat way of engrafting a tail;
But, some how, those promising plans were laid by—
At this distance of time I can scarce tell you why;
Then—(for Hope hangs her "yarns" upon every weak peg)—
They thought of the man made Lord Anglesea's leg;
But he, when applied to, thought fit to decline—
"'Pon his *honour*, the job was quite out of his line:"
Whereupon Merlin said to his wife, in a huff,
"It's all owing to you, ma'am, I've met this rebuff!
What, the deuce! a'n't I well enough still, madam wife,
To pair with *your* beauties, at your time of life?"
Then he muttered less loudly, but still very grump,
"Mind your own old gray tail, I'm content with my stump!"

At those terrible words—'twas the first time in's life
Merlin ever had rated his worthy old wife—

* The intellectual reader will, doubtless, interpret this word in the sense to which it is now adapted; viz. re-creation, reproduction; not recreation, *amusement;* which latter, though the more common reading, would be far from applicable to any part of the Abernethian process.

She was struck to the heart—sickened—took to her bed—
And never smiled after, nor held up her head.
He was shocked—made apologies—swore by his beard—
('Twas burnt off, by the by)—"there was nothing he feared
Half so much as the loss of so virtuous a wife,
For whom he was ready to lay down his life,
If the Fates would be pleased to accept it, instead
Of her precious existence. It made his heart bleed
To behold her sad state—it was too much, indeed,
For his poor shattered nerves. Just to vary the scene,
He'd step out a minute or two on the green—
Take a turn up and down, and a sniff of fresh air."
So he went,—and, by mere chance, encountering there
His cousin (a giddy, young, frolicsome gig)—
"I'll tell you what, Grizzy!" says he, "dash my wig!
If I don't think the old lady's hopping the twig!"

My dears! it's a sad painful task to narrate
Such unfeeling expressions: too surely, of late
Much change had been wrought in the mind of our hero;
In fact, ever since his adventure with Pierrot;
Though *why* that mishap should have worked such a change,
Is—(I own it)—a thing unaccountably strange:
One would think his good sense had been *only entailed;*
His good *feelings* indeed—'tis most certain they failed

At this critical juncture, when conjugal love
Should have caused him to mourn, like a fond, faithful dove,
For his dear dying spouse. But, perhaps, after all—
(For there's nothing like candour)—those words were let fall
In a passion of grief, when unspeakable pain
Had with sudden delirium affected his brain;
Or, may be, he affected that frolicsome air
Just to mask his soul's anguish, his deadly despair:—
We know how deceitful appearances are,
And how many examples (without searching far)
May be found, of disconsolate husbands, left lonely
By the death of dear spouses, whose sorrows can only
Be guessed at, with art so profound they conceal
That "grief passing show" which we know they *must* feel.

There's something excessively moving, my dears,
In that grief which the poet calls "too deep for tears;"
'Tis so *very refined!*—*so*—*so deep!*—and all that—
And there can be no doubt but our poor widowed cat—
(For his lady went off that same day in a dose—
A sweet quiet ending!)—felt exquisite throes
Of extremest concern; though to *outward* appearance
You'd have sworn he considered her loss a good clearance.
That night, just as usual, he went out a-mousing,
And up, in the moonshine, I saw him carousing.

On the roof of a house, with a frolicsome set
Of his long-tailed associates. Perhaps they were met—
(Indeed, by the clamours I heard over head,
I should think it most likely)—to howl for the dead.

One thing, I must own, seemed at first rather shocking,
And one can't be surprised that it set people talking.
Before his late spouse had departed this life
The short space of three days, he had taken to wife—
(Such indecorous haste turns one's senses quite dizzy
At the first contemplation)—his cousin Miss Grizzy!
Good gracious! how people (the ladies most furiously)
Cried shame on such scandalous haste!—how injuriously
They bespattered poor Merlin!—and yet it came out,
After all, that they set up this terrible shout
At an act that had been, on the widower's part,
Performed with excessive reluctance of heart,
In compliance with wishes breathed into his ear
With her very last sigh by his poor dying dear!

'Tis surprising how often fond wives, when they're dying,
Make this parting request! and how *very* complying
The wretched survivors invariably prove
With that sad, solemn, sacred injunction of love!

Our hero was still in the noon-day of life
When he took to himself this young rantipole wife;
And things for *a time* pretty smoothly went on;
But scarce was the honeymoon over and gone,
When madam began to make game of her hubby—
Called him "Crop Ears," and "Dock Tail," and "Bald Pate,"
and "Stubby!"
And, when he was angered beyond all endurance,
Whisked her tail in his face, with a scornful assurance.
On the whole, a meek mouser, a friend to tranquillity,
Was our ill-mated Merlin. Much nervous debility,
Ever since his last roasting, had shaken his system;
And now he thought sadly—for sorely he missed 'em—
Of those tender attentions, that coaxing and coddling,
That once, in the dear dead and gone, he called twaddling.

By the by, what a luminous trail (like the light
That streams from some old rotten timbers at night)
Is perceived very often, when people are dead,
In the wake of their virtues! Of some, be it said,
This radiance phosphoric 's emitted so brightly,
Whose merits, while living, were thought of but lightly.

Well, my dear little friends! to get on with my tale,
(For your patience, I doubt, is beginning to fail),

I must tell you how matters from bad came to worse,
Till Merlin, grown desp'rate, was ready to curse
The day of his birth. I acknowledge 'twas sinful;
But could you have seen what an absolute skinful
Of bones and affliction his once portly frame
Had become, with soft pity you'd temper the blame.
Whole days to some gloomy seclusion he'd fly,
On a rafter perched up in the cock-loft so high;
And there, in a sort of brown study or dose,
Would he sit, with the tears trickling off from his nose
To his whiskers, till each to the tip so beset
From his muzzle, stuck out like a diamond aigrette:
And, what made it more touching, he'd sometimes turn round
As to wipe his poor eyes (in abstraction profound)
With that natural kerchief his person once bore
In the shape of a tail, that now graced it no more!

That moment! that action! O, Raphael! O, Titian!
For a spark of your genius! Alack! I may wish on
Long enough for the like; but I'll try as I may,
The affectingly beautiful sight to portray.
Those tears rolling down—and to wipe 'em away
With what once was a tail—now reduced (lackaday!)
To that stump sticking out like the stalk of a melon!
O, my dears! it's a subject too painful to dwell on—

Drop a tear of your own—if you please, one or two—
And be thankful such woes are not meted to you;
For, having no tails, my young friends, you can never
Know the anguish of losing that feature for ever.
By degrees (as in time all things here find their level)
Our couple grown wiser, grew distant and civil—
Chose separate lodgings—kept separate table—
(Leaving *her* the whole house-range, *he* took to the stable),
And by private convention, where each was a winner,
Never met but to see some set party to dinner.
At such times their behaviour was really quite sterling!
So polite and all that. 'Twas—"My dear Mister Merlin,
Shall I send you a leg of this mouse? it's so juicy!"
And, "My dear Mrs. M.," sometimes "dear Mrs. Pussy,
Let me tempt you to try this cock-robin au naturel,
Or a few of these chafers croquant à la pastorelle;
Dip your whiskers, my life, in this cream or this custard;
Do, love! try this fondu—'tis made without mustard."

Now and then there were side hits, a *leetle* bit spiteful,
But perfectly well bred. Enfin, 'twas delightful!
And the Merlins were cited in all their friends' houses
As "glasses of fashion," and quite pattern spouses.

The société intime of our new-modelled pair,
Was, of course, (like their lodging,) a sep'rate affair,
On the very best footing. Madame had a soirée
Three times in the week — waltzing, quadrilles, écarté;
But, being cerulean (which so much the ton is),
She piqued herself most on her conversaziones —
With album and annual — play, poem, review —
Remains dear to sentiment — gems of virtù —
The sole of a boot that immortal Grimalkin,
The Marquis de Carabas' cat, used to stalk in —
One of Selima's whiskers — three hairs of the cat
Made a "poet's heart go" (he confessed) "pit-a-pat;"
And things that could never have entered the thought o' man.
Littered table and chiffonnière — sofa and ottoman —
Sported lions of sorts — all the best of the season,
Were sure to be found at her banquets of reason;
And one, the recherché of all the select,
She secured the whole run of — imported direct
From Persia, his country — his birth-place Shiraz —
Descended (the pedigree ran without flaws)
From cats that had purred to, — no paltry Shahzadeh,
But princes of poesie, Hafiz and Saadi.

Smart pages frisked round (each a kitten Hyperion!)
With refreshments concocted by nicest criterion—
Asafœtida wafers—the tea Greek valerian—
And the creams were *not* iced—your feline gastronomes
Have no taste for that part of our two-legged *at homes*.
I should mention (for candour's a duty imperious)
That the lady, grown azure, had also grown *serious;*
And her Sunday soirées—'twas a pleasing variety!—
Were arranged by the very last fashion of piety;
One favourite subject of grave consultation—
The means of converting the Catabaw nation.

Meantime, Mister Merlin thought proper to seek
Social comfort from elements far more unique;
His retreat was, you know, to the stable; and there,
For his amie du cœur, he selected—a mare!—
A great female Houyhuhum! Ay! well you may stare,
As all the world did, at that bizarre selection;
But Malice herself never breathed a reflection
Impugning its sanctity. Mind was its basis—
A mystical union!—in every phasis
By all the enlightened no otherwise viewed, nor———
Like the late Czar's, in short, for the late Madame Kreudner!
But friendships, though virtuous, if very unequal
The parties professing, may prove in the sequel

Extremely disastrous:—the fate of our cat
Will exhibit an awful example of that.

For a time all went well — Merlin's place was the manger,
Where Dapple stood munching; but, not to derange her,
He always took care in a corner to curl up—
(You know there was no length of train left to furl up);
And, because she was blind of one eye (on the right side),
'Twas agreed he should carefully keep on her light side—
"Or else, my dear friend," she observed, "you might get
An unlucky chance grip when I'm very sharp set."

Feline prudence, like human, will sometimes wax sleepy;
And at last—O, my dears! I feel somehow quite creepy
At the thought of what's coming. And must I proceed?—
Let me off, I beseech!—you will not?—then, indeed,
I must screw up my courage to tell what will harrow
Your souls to the centre, and freeze your young marrow.

One morning ('twas that of St. Valentine's Day—
Remark the affecting coincidence, pray)—
Mrs. Dapple was found in a very strange way—
Her eyes popping out like a lobster's—her neck
Stiffened out like a spit, and as big as a peck;—

Quoth the groom, "Here's a job now! My name's not
Jack Winsey,
If the mare ain't done up—despurt bad wi' a quinsy!"
But then, feeling further, he sung out—"Confound her!
If the blinking old jade hav'n't gulped a twelve-pounder!"

With that, in a twinkling his arm making bare,
He plunged it deep down in her gullet, and there
Reached a substance—a something—*I* can't bring it out,
But *he* did—and (horrible brute!) such a shout
As he set up at sight of what only to *spell*
Is too much for my feelings—you guess it full well;
But, to make clear the climax beyond doubt or danger,
I'll just add—a *torso* was found in the manger.

Now, dear little misses! now, dear little masters!
Refuse not your tears to this tale of disasters;
Weep, Billy and Bobby! weep, Susy and Sophy!
"Cry quarts," if you can, for the cat's catastrophe.

THE END.

J. MOYES, TOOK'S COURT, LONDON.

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